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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/29/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [NO](#)
SUBJECT: THE UNLIKELY OSLO PEACE CONFERENCE

Classified By: DCM Kevin M. Johnson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. A Norwegian NGO seeks to draw heads of state of various governments to Oslo for an ill-defined peace conference and concert. A recent organizational meeting highlighted the challenges of bringing this to fruition. End Summary.

¶2. (C) An Oslo NGO, Foundation Dialogue for Peace, has been working for some months on the idea of bringing together leaders from conflict areas, along with their British and US counterparts, for a conference and concert. Although the organizers claim the support of former Prime Minister Bondevik and the GON, plans and participants have been very unclear. The Foundation did issue invitations to various leaders, including to the Israeli, Palestinian, Pakistani, Indian, UK and US heads of state.

¶3. (C) On March 27, the Foundation Chair (and Conservative MP) Inge Lonning and Foundation President Amir Sheikh called a meeting with relevant embassies to review plans so far. The meeting however largely served to highlight the lack of planning. At the beginning of the meeting, the Israeli Ambassador noted the proposed date of September 7 conflicts with the Jewish New Year holidays and the Jewish Sabbath, making Israeli participation nearly impossible. In a lengthy discussion that followed, Lonning said he would work with his committee to change the date to perhaps some time in October.

¶4. (C) The Indian Ambassador said that while they had received the invitation, they did not as a matter of policy have negotiations with Pakistan outside of a bilateral process. In response, Lonning outlined his vision of the conference as one with symbolic meaning only that would demonstrate to the world that even leaders from conflict areas could meet and talk. His presentation was however undermined by Sheikh's comment that the issue of Kashmir would not be a separate agenda item, implying however that other substantive agenda items would be included. Lonning agreed that in the next few weeks the Foundation would develop a proposed agenda so the Embassies would have a better sense of what the conference would be about.

¶5. (C) The UK explained that given PM Blair will be out of office by the time of the proposed conference, it is difficult to respond as to his interest. US emboff thanked them for the meeting but explained that for the US to consider the matter, we would require details such as a date, participants and proposed agenda. The Pakistani Embassy did not send a representative although Sheikh claimed that Musharaff is likely to attend, if the Indians sent a similar level representative. Only the Palestinian Ambassador firmly supported the conference saying that Abbas was fully committed to attending without conditions.

¶6. (C) The GON did not attend the meeting. MFA Peace and Reconciliation Division Chief Tore Hattrem explained that the MFA has rejected the Foundation's application for financial support because the conference seems unrealistic. For example, he questioned why India and Pakistan would discuss border issues outside of their regular meetings. He noted that the only acceptance is from Abbas who agrees to all events and cancels at the last minute. MFA however left room to take the matter up to the political level for a positive decision should the Foundation ever be able to prove senior leadership from the countries will attend.

¶7. (C) Comment: The Norwegian public genuinely believes they can make a difference resolving conflicts worldwide and are willing to commit substantial time and capital to the effort.

However, with a new NGO, no real support other than from the Palestinians and poor coordination/communications with involved Embassies, we doubt this conference will get off the ground. Nonetheless, we will continue to monitor it in the unlikely event major invitees do agree to come and the timing turns out to such that it could be useful to the peace process. End Comment.

WHITNEY